A SERMON,

PREACHED AT *MANCHESTER*,

BEFORE

His Excellency Thomas Chittenden, Esq; Governor,
His Honor Paul Spooner, Esq; Lieut. Governor,
The Honorable Council,
AND
The Honorable House of Representatives of the State of *Vermont*,

ON THE DAY OF THE

ANNIVERSARY ELECTION,

OCTOBER 10, 1782.

BY GERSHOM C. LYMAN, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF MARLBOROUGH.

GOD giveth Wisdom to the wise, and Knowledge to those who know Understanding.——Daniel ii. 21.
The Price of Wisdom is above Rubies.——Job xxviii. 18.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

SEVERAL paragraphs, which, for want of time, were omitted in delivering this diſcourſe, are now inſerted; which, it is hoped, will be no matter of offence to the hearers.

A N

ELECTION SERMON.

1 KINGS, iii. 9, 10.

Give therefore thy ſervant an underſtanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may diſcern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy ſo great a people? And the ſpeech pleaſed the Lord that Solomon had aſked this thing.

WISDOM is an eſſential attribute of Jehovah: it conſiſts in propoſing the beſt ends, and purſuing thoſe meaſures which are beſt adapted to effect them. Perfect wiſdom is the prerogative of God alone; but he hath been pleaſed to impart it, in different meaſures, to his rational creatures, and to make them capable of improvement therein: and the greater progreſs they make in the acquiſition of true wiſdom, the more they reſemble the all-wiſe God. This is an object moſt worthy of the purſuit of every rational mind. To propoſe the glory of God as our chief end, to ſeek the good of his creatures, and to purſue meaſures which are beſt fitted to promote ſo valuable purpoſes, is the higheſt *human* wiſdom.

Wiſdom is principally needed in our ſpiritual concerns, as theſe are moſt important. Our wiſdom, or folly, is moſt diſcovered in the regard, or diſregard, we ſhew to God and his law. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is underſtanding." However acute and diſcerning men may be in matters of leſs importance; yet, if there be a failure in that which is of higheſt concernment, the defect is ſo eſſential, that it ſeems hard to pronounce them wiſe, when we take into view the whole ſyſtem of their conduct. But however wiſdom is moſt neceſſary in our immediate concerns with God—

God—however the greateſt wiſdom is diſcovered in our regard and obedience to him; yet it is alſo neceſſary in every affair which relates to the preſent ſtate: and indeed, even in every worldly matter, wiſdom obliges us to have ſupreme regard to God, and in conducting them to ſeek the advancement of his declarative glory.

The nobler ends any one propoſes, and the more ſuitable means he uſes to compaſs thoſe ends, the more wiſdom he diſcovers. For one who acts in a low ſphere, a ſmall portion may ſuffice to enable him to proſecute his buſineſs with ſucceſs; and as his ſtation and employment riſe in importance, in ſuch proportion increaſes the neceſſity of greater wiſdom in order to a proper and reputable diſcharge of his duty. Great ſkill and prudence are abſolutely neceſſary, in thoſe who are called to act in a public important character, where the happineſs of many depends on their wiſe and faithful management of affairs. To illuſtrate this plain, though too much neglected, obſervation, I might adduce a long train of remarks on the duty of officers in the civil, military, and eccleſiaſtical departments; and point out many advantages, or miſchiefs, which may ariſe to the public and to individuals, from a ſuitable, or improper adminiſtration, in their reſpective places: but as the occaſion of the day, and the paſſage of ſcripture which ſtands at the head of this diſcourſe, direct me to ſpeak more particularly of civil rulers, I ſhall confine my obſervations principally to them.

The words of the text are the prayer of Solomon, the greateſt king, and the wiſeſt man, who ever lived: it was made ſoon after his acceſſion to the throne of Iſrael: the ſubſtance of his prayer is, that he may have *an underſtanding heart*, that is, *wiſdom and knowledge*, as it is expreſſed in the parallel paſſage, 2 Chron. i. 10. The argument he urges to obtain his requeſt, is, that he may be able to judge the people of the Lord —"Give thy ſervant an underſtanding heart, to judge thy people; that I may diſcern between good and bad"—"Let me have wiſdom to rule thy people with equity and ſkill, ſupporting and duly encouraging thoſe who deſerve it, and inflicting condign puniſhment on the criminal." He alſo expreſſes a ſenſe of his dependance on God for the wiſdom he needed—"For who is able to judge this thy ſo great a people?" i. e. who, without thy gracious aid and direction, can ſuitably conduct matters, ſo various and ſo important, as come within the province of the ruler of thy people?—And in the preceding context, we find him

ſpreading

ſpreading his cauſe before God, confeſſing his weakneſs and want of ſkill to direct him in the midſt of ſo great a people—"And now, O Lord my God, thou haſt made thy ſervant king—and I am but a little child—I know not how to go out, or come in." Solomon was not a *little child*, as to age; for David had before called him a *wiſe man:** but a child in knowledge and experience about matters of government. He had newly entered on the adminiſtration of government, and felt himſelf inadequate to the truſt; he therefore ſought wiſdom from God: though doubtleſs he was, at the ſame time, poſſeſſed of more wiſdom than thouſands who, thinking themſelves ſufficient for all things, have not ſought counſel from God, and have gone blindly on, leading the blind, till both they and their unhappy followers have been buried in the ſame ditch of ruin.

We here ſee the ideas Solomon had of the importance of a wiſe and prudent conduct in rulers, and where wiſdom is to be ſought. His ſentiments and example are doubtleſs well worthy the conſideration and imitation of all who are called to rule over others.

Our civil fathers will, I believe, join with me, when I ſay, they have as much need of wiſdom as had Solomon. Though the people they are called to rule are not ſo great as was the Jewiſh nation; yet that nation, at the time we ſpeak of, were in unity among themſelves—their enemies were all ſubdued—they were in a moſt flouriſhing condition—the nerves of government were ſtrong and vigorous: while we, at preſent, (let the conſideration humble us) are not ſo well united among ourſelves, and of conſequence the ſinews of government are not ſo firm and ſtable as might be wiſhed; add to this, that we are in our childhood, with reſpect to our exiſtence as a State—our rulers are conſidered, by many, as unexperienced in politics—their meaſures are therefore watched and ſcanned with more critical ſeverity. Hence ariſes greater difficulty in conducting to acceptance, and ſo as moſt effectually to promote the public good. Hence alſo the great neceſſity of care, wiſdom, and prudence, in every ſtep they take. When the ſea is calm, the pilot's duty is eaſy, and may be performed with leſs care and addreſs; but when a tempeſt riſes, and the ſhip is hurried on with irregular violence, he has need to look out with careful vigilance on every ſide, and to exert his utmoſt ſkill, to ſave her from foundering, or at leaſt from much damage.

* 1 Kings, iii. 9.

It has been obſerved, that wiſdom conſiſts in propoſing the beſt ends, and purſuing the moſt ſuitable means to compaſs thoſe ends. It is equally plain, that the higheſt end any one can propoſe, is that for which he was principally deſigned, or received his exiſtence. Strictly ſpeaking, there is but one chief object, at which all ſhould aim, viz. the promotion of God's glory. But in ſubordination, and with ultimate reference to this, there are other ends more immediately to be propoſed by men, which are various according to their different characters.

The main end of a civil ruler, as ſuch, is the well-being, peace, and happineſs, of community, or of the people at large; for this is the very end of his appointment—for this purpoſe he exiſts, in that *particular character*. His wiſdom, in that character, then, appears in his choice and ſteady proſecution of thoſe meaſures which will moſt effectually promote the public good. To reach this object, it is neceſſary that he be well acquainted with human nature in general. Since he is to rule over *men*, he muſt have a competent knowledge of men, in their preſent ſtate of imperfection, otherwiſe his meaſures cannot be well choſen.

Were mankind perfect in wiſdom and virtue, civil laws and rulers would be needleſs. From the vicious paſſions, the irregular luſts, the ſelfiſh, encroaching diſpoſition of men, ariſe the neceſſity of human laws and government; which are deſigned to regulate thoſe evils which are the natural offspring of ſuch diſordered minds. He, therefore, who is to make laws for men, muſt be acquainted with theſe diſorders of human nature, and muſt have obſerved the ſeveral evil conſequences they produce, that he may know what rules and penalties are beſt calculated to remedy thoſe miſchiefs. But this is not the only light in which the ruler is to conſider mankind: he ſhould conſider them as the ſame order and ſpecies of beings with himſelf—equal by nature—having equal rights—of equal importance in the ſight of God—as rational creatures, who are to be bound by no laws which are not founded in reaſon—as accountable to God—under the abſolute controul of the King of kings, and who cannot, without manifeſt impropriety, and unfaithfulneſs to their Supreme Lord, yield an implicit and unlimited obedience to any ſubordinate power, or obey any laws which are repugnant to his: he muſt alſo be acquainted with the genius and circumſtances of the particular people over whom he rules, that his government may be adapted

to

to ſerve their intereſt, and maintain order; for the ſame laws and adminiſtration are not ſuited to every people, or to the ſame people at all times.

It is the will of heaven, that there ſhould be civil government in the world; and ſince all civil rulers, duly authoriſed to act as ſuch, are ordained of God, under whom they have an inferior kind of dominion, for the preſervation of order among his creatures, and the promotion of their happineſs, it muſt be their duty, as much as poſſible, to preſerve the *dignity* of government: for otherwiſe they cannot anſwer the ends for which they were ordained---they will not be a terror to evil-workers; nor can they ſuitably encourage and protect the good.

Law and authority held in contempt, are productive of more miſchief than advantage. To prevent this evil, it is highly important that no laws be made but ſuch as tend to the peace, protection, and happineſs, of the people; and that a ſufficient number, with adequate penalties, be made, to reſtrain thoſe who are diſpoſed to tranſgreſs; that every law be ſeverely examined as to its nature, and the manner of its operation; that it be juſt, well adapted, and expreſſed in the moſt unequivocal terms: for if a law be unjuſt, or unſuitable, or ſo expreſſed as to admit of a double meaning, it will, moſt probably, be diſregarded; the makers of it will ſink into contempt; and people will be taught to rack their wits to elude the force of all law, by evaſive conſtruction. And as the law is the rule by which the executive powers muſt be directed, if that be not good, all their proceedings muſt, of courſe, be unjuſt, or improper---the whole ſyſtem of adminiſtration be involved in intricate mazes of error---the very means appointed to preſerve order, become irregular and confuſed---and the complaint of Solomon be renewed---"I ſaw under the ſun the place of judgment, that wickedneſs was there; and the place of righteouſneſs, that iniquity was there*." And if, through human imperfection, or any other cauſe, laws have paſſed which do not anſwer the propoſed end, but operate unjuſtly, prudence and faithfulneſs demand their immediate repeal.

God only acts invariably right---it is proper to him alone to be *of one mind:* it is an honor to men to perceive and correct their miſtakes. Nor does the dignity of government depend more on the enacting good laws, than on their punctual execution. To paſs laws which, from their own nature, and the nature of men, can never be executed, or not enforcing ſuch

* Eccleſ. iii. 16.

ſuch as are practicable, will infallibly unſtring the nerves of government, and render it contemptible. Men become *great* offenders by *habit*. If ſome laws are made, the force of which may be eaſily evaded, and others not put in practice, they preſently become *bold* in breaking over laws which they would not have dared to violate, and contrive a thouſand tricks to elude juſtice, which they would never have thought of under a more wiſe and ſteady adminiſtration. In proof of this, our own obſervation, for a few years paſt, is in the room of a thouſand arguments: and how it hath opened the flood-gates of vice, and let in the *deſpiſing of dominion and ſpeaking evil of dignities*, and open wickedneſs, once ſuppreſſed by the reſtraint of law, theſe now prevailing vices loudly declare.

Arguing from the above principle, ſhall we not conclude it a matter of high importance to a State newly erected, that they be peculiarly careful what laws they enact, and if any be found wrong, that they ſoon repeal or alter them; if not, that they punctually execute them, that people may not get *accuſtomed to tranſgreſſion?* For one may almoſt as well attempt to change the ſkin of the Ethiopian, or wipe off the indelible ſpot of the Leopard, as to form thoſe to good manners who have been accuſtomed to the contrary, or to make good ſubjects of thoſe who have been uſed to diſobedience. It cannot be denied, indeed, that in the early dawn of a State, before it has acquired a good degree of conſiſtence and firmneſs, great difficulties may ariſe in this reſpect; and yet it is hard to ſay how it can otherwiſe ever become firm and vigorous.

Here, then, is a field for the diſplay of the ruler's wiſdom, prudence, and ſtability; and much depends on the manner in which he acquits himſelf. That the laws may be duly executed, it is neceſſary that wiſe and ſuitable perſons be appointed for that purpoſe: it muſt be an important duty for thoſe to whom it belongs to appoint them, to "provide out of all the people, able men, ſuch as fear God, men of truth, hating covetouſneſs*:" Such will not be likely to betray their truſt, and bring diſhonour on government, and miſery on the people, by ignorance, or fear, or irreſolution, or unfaithfulneſs, or baſe, ſelfiſh ends. Every hand is not fit to wield the ſword of juſtice. There is ſuch a thing as "*folly* ſet in great dignity, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler†:" and *a great evil* it is: may experience never teach us how great!

If

* Exod. xviii 21. † Eccleſ. x. 5, 6.

If the appointment of executive rulers be a matter of such consequence, *their* duty must be important. While they sit in the seat of judgment, impartial justice must mark all their proceedings: the cause of the poor must not be despised, nor a misplaced pity indulged towards the man in low estate; nor may dastardly fear, or fawning flattery, influence their proceedings with respect to the rich and powerful; nor may self-interested views be cast into the balance in either case: uninfluenced justice, proceeding from the merits of the cause, must be portrayed on every decision; for *the judgment is God's**. This is the command of our God, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour†."

To preserve a proper air of dignity, every ruler, legislative or executive, must engage in the public affairs of his office with great gravity, seriousness, and solemnity; with calm attention must he deliberate on all public measures; and firmly fixed in a well-formed purpose, pursue it with inflexible stability. The man who is ever wavering and shifting his ground, is like a wave of the sea, and as little to be depended on—shews that he never acts from a deliberate, well-directed judgment—all his measures, like himself, are inconsistent, incoherent, jarring and opposite one to the other: and what will be the consequence of this in a ruler, is obvious to every mind of discernment. Whatever appears light, trifling, or unsuitable in the conduct of a public officer, detracts from his dignity, and begets light ideas of the man, in the minds of others, who watch all his conduct: and from despising the ruler, to despising the law, is an easy transition.

In the same view, I may mention the necessity of fulfilling *public engagements*. The debts of government, as well as of private persons, should be punctually discharged, according to the true meaning of the contract. Any appearance of fraud, or want of care and attention herein, will produce much evil in a State.

Public bodies should be examples of justice and punctuality; for most people look to them as examples, and think themselves fairly justified if they do not exceed them in slackness. If many are not mistaken, a failure in this point hath much lessened the dignity, and weakened the hands of government, in neighbouring States—promises of

money

* Deut. i. 17. † Levit. xix 15.

money having been made at a fixed time, when it has not appeared that they had a reaſonable proſpect of obtaining it; and when the time hath elapſed, they have not ſo much as provided ways and means to make payment—till none were willing to truſt their money, or enter into ſervice on public ſecurity.

When individuals cannot obtain the debts juſtly due to them from the State, they think themſelves injured—diſcontents ariſe—rulers are evil ſpoken of, and government falls into contempt. But there are other reaſons why public debts ſhould be diſcharged—juſtice requires it—the law of God requires it. Do not the ſame laws of equity which oblige individuals to pay each other their dues, equally bind public bodies? The law of God is plain, "Withhold not good from thoſe to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it*." And where ſervice is done by thoſe who are poor, and depend on their labour for ſupport, the law is more particular: "Thou ſhalt not oppreſs an hired ſervant, who is poor and needy; at his day thou ſhalt give him his hire, neither ſhall the ſun go down upon it; for he is poor, and ſitteth his heart upon it—leſt he cry againſt thee unto the Lord, and it be ſin unto thee:" "Thou ſhalt not defraud thy neighbour, nor rob him; the wages of him who is hired ſhall not abide with thee all night until the morning†." Theſe rules will apply in the caſe of many debts due from the public, and oblige to the payment of them by the time ſtipulated. Juſtice requires that every one receive his dues from the State in ſeaſon—the public good, and the law of God, require it: and is it not probable, that a want of due attention in this matter, has had an evil tendency to corrupt the morals of the people—has encouraged them in acts of fraud and breach of faith? yea, has it not *become ſin* to the land? It may, doubtleſs, happen, through the ſlow operation of public meaſures, that punctual payments cannot be made, though there was a reaſonable proſpect of it, at the time of engagement: but whether it has not often been for want of ſufficient and ſeaſonable attention, is matter of juſt inquiry.

Another important branch of the ruler's duty, and mark of his wiſdom, is, the promotion of uſeful learning. This is neceſſary to the happineſs, and even to the long exiſtence, of a free State. A blind man is not more eaſily robbed of his treaſure, than an ignorant people of

* Prov. iii. 27. † Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. Levit. xix. 13.

of their liberty. The ſlavery of a people, once free, generally ariſes from their own ignorance on one hand, and the luſt of domination and greatneſs in their rulers on the other. Care will be taken to guard againſt this evil, by thoſe rulers who wiſh well to the liberty and welfare of their people. They will take care to promote every kind of uſeful knowledge; unleſs they be ignorant themſelves, and imbibe the abſurd opinion of ſome, who think ſuch moſt fit to lead in church and ſtate—and then what marvel if they, and the people unhappily led by them, are both involved in the wretched fate of blind guides and their followers?

The education of youth, and encouragement of ſuperior genius, are objects of high importance, and deſerve the ſpecial attention of rulers. Eſtabliſhing and endowing ſocieties for that purpoſe, is a ſervice which merits the thanks and applauſe of the public. For want of time and ability, it is not expected that the body of the people will follow the paths of ſcience, ſo as to attain great literary acquirements; yet a certain degree of knowledge diffuſed through a State, is abſolutely neceſſary to preſerve liberty and good government. Nothing, but the religion of Jeſus, is of equal importance with the good education of youth, and the promotion of knowledge. Power and wealth may ſupport tyranny and deſpotiſm; but liberty and order are not to be preſerved without learning and virtue. *Ignorance* is a natural ſource of error, ſelf-conceit, and contracted, groveling ſentiments: and how difficult it is to rule people of ſuch a caſt, thoſe can beſt tell, who have made the experiment: more *wiſe in their own conceit than ſeven men who can render a reaſon*, they ever find fault with public men and meaſures, and thwart them all in their power. An *ignorant patriot* is a *rarity* in the world: from their contracted ſentiments ariſe diſcontent and murmurs, if at any time the public liberty and ſafety demand ſpecial exertion and increaſed charge, and their unmeaning tongues utter continual anathema's againſt thoſe meaſures which their narrow minds cannot comprehend. Such will be the caſe with theſe people, while they have ſome notions of liberty, and actually retain a degree of it: but if deſigning, ambitious, and artful men, are diſpoſed to riſe on the ruins of their freedom, they ſee not the danger until it is too late; or, if they do, know not the proper means to avoid it.

May

May I not add, as another very important part of the care and duty of a ruler, the ſuppreſſion of vice and immorality, the promotion of moral virtue, the good of the church, and the intereſt of religion in general? Rulers ſhould be a *terror to evil works*—they ſhould *diſcern*, and make a *difference between good and bad*—they ſhould ſo conduct in their ſeveral places, that the vicious may not only be aſhamed, but afraid to hold up their heads: nor is their duty in this matter merely negative—they muſt not only ſuppreſs vice, but encourage virtue by their example, and by laws ſo framed and executed that they may tend to meliorate the morals of the people. The church of God is his peculiar treaſure, and he will doubtleſs protect her againſt all the efforts of devils, and men influenced from beneath. The ruler's care is not needed to preſerve her *being*, as if ſhe could not ſubſiſt without; for God is engaged to preſerve her from deſtruction: but that his care is not needed to her *well-being*, in any ſenſe, I think, is not quite ſo plain. The church is, indeed, an eſtabliſhment entirely diſtinct from civil government—ſo is a ſeminary of learning; but does it thence follow, that they have no dependance on each other; or that, though they may exiſt ſeparately, they are like equally to flouriſh without any connection or mutual ſupport afforded to each other? Is there any inconſiſtence in ſuppoſing that God, who has erected a church in the world, and has alſo ordained civil government, hath deſigned they ſhould be fellow-helpers one to the other? or that magiſtrates in their place, as well as miniſters, ſhould be uſed as inſtruments in promoting the ſame cauſe? It is not ſuppoſed that they have any right to interfere in impoſing articles of faith, particular modes of worſhip, and things of a like nature—God only is Lord of conſcience—every one has an undoubted right to chooſe that religion and mode of worſhip which to him appears moſt agreeable to the word of God, unleſs it be ſuch as evidently tends to deſtroy civil peace and government; in that caſe no one ought to be *tolerated*—ſelf-preſervation forbids it—and we know they have not the approbation of God, who, under pretence of ſerving him, would nullify his ordinance. But the church, while militant, muſt have her temporal intereſts: in theſe, I think, ſhe has an undoubted right to the protection of the civil magiſtrate--he ſhould protect chriſtian ſocieties in the peaceable enjoyment of all their rights, derived from the goſpel charter---he ſhould take care that they be not diſturbed and infringed

on,

on, in their worſhip, diſcipline, and ordinances, by diſorderly perſons, who may ſeek to impede or moleſt them---they ſhould encourage and provide for the ſupport of public worſhip, and thoſe who miniſter in ſacred things.

But, as the propriety of any meaſures taken by civil rulers, in matters of religion, either for the ſupport of worſhip, or miniſters, is diſputed by many ſerious perſons, permit me to offer two or three conſiderations on this point.

That proviſion was made for upholding the public worſhip of God, and the ſupport of his prieſts, under the Jewiſh œconomy, and that their pious rulers made it their care to ſee that people performed their duty in this reſpect, and were approved of God in it, I ſuppoſe will not be denied. Moſes, the friend of God, and ruler of his people, was very aſſiduous in preſerving the honour and ſupporting the worſhip of God—"Ye ſhall keep my ſabbaths, and reverence my ſanctuary*," ſays he, in the name of the Lord: he was careful to ſee it done—he made ample proviſion for the ſupport of thoſe who miniſtered before the Lord: this he did by the immediate direction of God. Good Hezekiah hath left a ſimilar example, and is commended as having *wrought that which was good, and right, and truth, before the Lord his God* †. From hence I would argue, that the thing is *right in itſelf*, and acceptable to God, that rulers ſhould interpoſe in theſe matters: for, whatever peculiarities there were in the Jewiſh polity and diſpenſation, God never appointed any thing, or approved it, which in its nature was wrong, or unſuitable, or infringed on the rights of conſcience; it is impoſſible that he ſhould do either—he is perfect—his will is a law to conſcience. In a government, under laws of God's own appointment, the *ruler* was to attend to theſe things: why ſhould not that be conſidered as a good example for rulers now? why ſhould not they, in doing the ſame things, be thought to do that which is *good and right* before God *now* as well as then? the church might have ſubſiſted, the worſhip and miniſters of God ſupported, without them then, as well as now; but he ſaw fit to uſe them as inſtruments to aſſiſt his church in theſe matters. This argument receives additional force from Paul's diſcourſe, 1 Corinth. ix. "Know ye not, that thoſe who miniſter about holy things live of the things of the temple? and thoſe who wait at the altar are partakers with

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* Levit. xix. 30.

† 2 Chron. xxxi. 2, 4, 20.

the altar? Even ſo hath the Lord ordained that thoſe who preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel." Q. D. You may know from what was God's will under the old teſtament, what is his will under the new; he had his miniſters then, and he appointed them a ſupport: *Even ſo* hath he ordained with reſpect to his miniſters under the goſpel—they ſhall have their ſupport, though not in the ſame way in which the Jewiſh prieſts were provided for, by the offerings of the Lord, they having ceaſed; yet they have a title to a maintenance, as a reward for their labour, and that they may be devoted to the ſervice of Chriſt.

If it be juſt reaſoning in this caſe, to infer from what was God's will under the old teſtament, what is his will under the new, as the apoſtle does, why may we not ſay without heſitation, that ſince it appears to have been his will then, that civil rulers ſhould concern themſelves in theſe affairs, therefore it is his will now? why ſhould they not make laws which ſhall ſecure the miniſters of Chriſt in their juſt dues? why ſhould they not enjoin the upholding of public worſhip? why ſhould not the church expect and receive their aid *now*, as well as then?—eſpecially when, among many valuable favours promiſed to her under the goſpel, greater than ſhe enjoyed under the old diſpenſation, this is mentioned as one, viz. the ſupport ſhe ſhould receive from the rulers of the Gentiles, whole wealth and power ſhould be employed for her good: "Kings ſhall be thy nurſing fathers, and their queens thy nurſing mothers"—"Thou ſhalt ſuck the breaſts of kings, and thou ſhalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer,"* &c. What is the amount of this leſs than that it is the duty of the ruler to befriend the church and the miniſters of Chriſt, and take care for their encouragement and ſupport, and ſecurity in all their juſt rights? Is it the duty of a nurſing father to cheriſh, ſupport, and protect the child, to be careful and tender of its intereſt, to defend it from injury, to maintain all its rights? and has the goſpel church a promiſe of the like care from the ruler? Judge then, whether Chriſt is not pleaſed when the civil arm takes her under its protection, and affords her that help which he hath promiſed her from it?—Let the ruler conſider this, and learn his duty†.

* Iſaiah xlix 23 & 60. xvi. If

† *The above arguments, to prove it the ruler's duty to take care of the intereſts of religion, &c. have been taken only from ſcripture. I beg leave here*

If it be the duty of rulers to promote religion and the ſervice of God, ſurely it muſt be highly important that they be men of religion themſelves: they ſhould be men of prayer, who make frequent application to God for wiſdom, and an underſtanding heart to lead the people:— "If any man lack wiſdom, let him aſk it of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him; but let him

here further to ſuggeſt, that if it be his duty to purſue every meaſure which tends to the peace and good order of ſociety, then it is his duty thus to provide for the ſupport of the public worſhip of God, &c. for experience abundantly teaches, that there is moſt peace and good order, generally, in thoſe ſocieties where the goſpel is preached and regularly attended. If the preaching of the goſpel tends to reform the morals of people, and people of good morals are beſt members of ſociety, it can't be denied that it is of importance to every community, that the goſpel be regularly preached, and the preachers of it encouraged by a ſupport which ſhall enable them to attend to that work: and rulers who ſeek the peace and good order of ſociety, muſt make due proviſion for it. Nor can the plea of conſcience *be reaſonably made againſt this:—How does it infringe on the rights of conſcience, for the ruler to oblige people to thoſe outward acts of duty which God hath enjoined, and which are found needful for the good of ſociety? If he enjoins what is repugnant to the law of God---if he preſcribes articles of faith, or modes of worſhip, &c. let him be oppoſed: but if he finds outward acts of duty required in the word of God, which are highly for the benefit of community, how does he injure conſcience by obliging people to perform them? God has commanded that men ſhould not ſteal and rob one another, and no one thinks the rights of conſcience invaded when the ruler makes laws to enforce this command, or to puniſh the tranſgreſſor of it--every one ſees that the good of ſociety requires it. God hath reſerved to himſelf ſuch a proportion of temporal goods which he hath lent us, as is ſufficient to uphold his worſhip---with-holding that, is robbing him; Mal. iii. 8. "Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings"---they with-held what God had appointed for the ſupport of his prieſts and worſhip: this he calls* robbing *him. Now how are the rights of conſcience invaded, if the ruler makes laws to prevent their robbing God in this with-holding what he claims for ſupport of his worſhip, when at the ſame time the public good requires it, more than when he enforces, by law, the command not to rob men?*

him aſk in faith,*" &c. Solomon was not aſhamed to acknowledge before God, that he lacked wiſdom; and he earneſtly aſked it of him—"and it pleaſed the Lord that Solomon had aſked this thing." God would have all men aſk wiſdom of him—he is the Father of lights, who alone can enlighten their paths; if they aſk it not of him, they have reaſon to fear he will leave them to walk in darkneſs: how then can they tell where they go, or whither they ſhall lead the people?

The ſpirit and temper of the goſpel, wrought in the heart by the powerful grace of God, raiſes the human mind to its original excellence—forms it into a likeneſs to God himſelf. A ſupreme regard to God and his law, gives beauty to every action—adds dignity to every character—increaſes the honour of dignity itſelf—and confers peculiar luſtre upon the ruler in his high ſtation. This is a moſt eſſential part of his character, without which all other qualifications are leſs to be depended on. This is the leaſt doubtful ſecurity of his fidelity in the diſcharge of his truſt, in every inſtance. Other principles may prompt him to faithfulneſs at ſome times, and in general; yet this alone can be relied on to keep him ſtedfaſt and immoveable in the line of his duty at *all times*, and under all temptations. This will have a ſalutary influence on all his meaſures, and rouſe him to the nobleſt exertions for the common good: this will make him truly honorable—for thoſe who honour God, he will honour: this will procure him the eſteem and love of all the people whom he rules in righteouſneſs, whoſe good opinion is worth having: it will ſecure him in their confidence and loyalty—command reſpect to his perſon—veneration for his laws—give weight to his counſel—and authority to his whole adminiſtration. Such magiſtrates, ruling over men in the fear of the Lord, are to be reckoned among the greateſt temporal bleſſings, refreſhing and gladdening to the hearts of the people, affording them the moſt agreeable proſpects, like "the light of the morning when the ſun riſeth, even a morning without clouds"---"when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice†."

Religion is neceſſary in rulers, not only *as ſuch*, but *as men:* it is of the laſt importance to themſelves, that they be poſſeſſed of the *pure wiſdom which is from above*; for otherwiſe they ſhall never ſee God in peace. Their dignified ſtation on earth, can never raiſe them to heaven, or do the leaſt part towards recommending them to the favour of God,

or

* James i. 5. † 2 Sam. xxiii 4. Prov. xxix. 2.

or qualifying them for the enjoyment of thoſe pleaſures which flow at his right hand evermore. When preſently the thin curtain of time ſhall be drawn aſide, and diſcloſe the amazing ſcenes of eternity---the dazzling ſplendor of earthly honour and greatneſs ſhall all vaniſh as the ſmoke, and thoſe who are revered and called *gods* on earth, ſhall appear to be only men. Then, if they are not found lovers of God, and members of Chriſt---if it appears that they have not acted from higher than merely temporal, earthly motives---all their deeds of heroiſm, juſtice, or public ſervice, ſhall no more be remembered, or come into mind: their greatneſs ſhall not be mentioned, unleſs it be to aggravate their doom, for having miſimproved greater light, and opportunities of doing good, and glorifying God. However wiſe and diſcerning they may have been in matters of human policy; if they have not the *wiſdom which is from above*, they will not be accounted wiſe in God's eſteem: "Be wiſe therefore now, O ye kings, and be inſtructed, ye judges of the earth---ſerve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling---kiſs the ſon, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way*."

But that I may not too far exceed the limit of time which propriety allows me; I muſt proceed to a more particular application to his Excellency, and our other Honorable Rulers here preſent.

Reſpected and honored Fathers,

AS I appear here this day in compliance with your deſire, you will permit me to recommend the example of Solomon, in my text, as a noble pattern for your imitation. It is a memorable maxim of his, that "wiſdom is the principal thing"---to know how to tranſact every matter in the beſt manner, and to the nobleſt end, and to practiſe accordingly, raiſes a man to the ſummit of true greatneſs---"therefore get wiſdom†," adds the wiſe king. May you be enabled to ſeek it not only in the uſe of common means---not only by the diligent ſtudy of human nature and human laws---but by a careful attention to the law of God, which contains the wiſeſt maxims of policy, which alone can make us wiſe unto ſalvation, and which will be the rule of our final trial before the great Judge. And while you tranſact matters of ſtate, and feel their weighty importance, as every faithful ruler will, who conſiders how much the happineſs of a whole community depends on his conduct, you will not forget to make frequent application to the throne of grace, and earneſt-

* Pſ ii. 10, 11, 12. † Prov. iv. 7.

ly adopt the words of Solomon, "Give thy ſervant an underſtanding heart, to rule thy people:" it will be pleaſing and acceptable to God, if you aſk this thing, and you may hope for his preſence and bleſſing. If God bleſs and lead you, you need deſpair of nothing; for nothing is too hard for the Almighty: no clouds are ſo thick but he can diſpel the gloom---no labyrinth ſo intricate but he can direct you ſafely through -- no duty ſo difficult but he can give wiſdom and ſtrength to diſcharge it---no danger or temptation ſo great but he can give ſtability, fortitude, and reſolution, to withſtand them, and perſevere undaunted.

Our eyes are on you, civil Fathers, as, under God, the guardians of our rights, the preſervers of our peace and happineſs. While you are honoured with the truſt repoſed in you by a free people, we doubt not you will remember that true honour conſiſts not merely in an elevated ſtation; but in a wiſe and faithful diſcharge of the duties of that ſtation. We expect, yea, God expects of you, that you be juſt, ruling in his fear---that you enact juſt and good laws, and ſee that they be well executed---that you pay great deference to the laws yourſelves; to your own and the laws of God. If legiſlators and judges diſregard the law, the people in lower ſtation ſoon catch the dangerous infection---*the foundations are deſtroyed*---the ends of government fruſtrated---and vice rides in triumph. We confide in your wiſdom, to provide able men for executive officers, who fear God and hate covetouſneſs---men of wiſdom, who love their country and revere its laws---men of calmneſs, and unſhaken firmneſs, who *dare* do juſtly, and are diſpoſed to ſhew mercy, as the caſe may require. We truſt your commiſſions will never be given to men of ſordid minds, who prefer popular applauſe or private *pelf*, to the cauſe of truth and the public good. We hope you will take effectual meaſures to preſerve the public credit, by a ſtrict adherence to juſtice, and the law of God in the diſcharge of public debts.

From what has been already done, we take encouragement that our rulers will ever be patrons of literature. Something has been attempted towards the promotion of learning, in this ſtate; but much remains, to eſtabliſh a college on a reſpectable footing, and to encourage leſs ſchools: the lands ſequeſtered to the uſe of ſchools in this ſtate, which are, for the moſt part, unprofitable at preſent, might, if duly improved, go far towards their ſupport. What may be done by the help of theſe, and other lands yet unappropriated, or by any other mean, we hope you

will

will ſeriouſly conſider. This matter deſerves particular attention, ſince the means of education are ſo very ſmall in this ſtate, and the danger of *ſhame* of ignorance, in this enlightened age of the world, are ſo great. Methinks the peculiar advantages we have, if duly and ſeaſonably uſed, may lay a durable foundation for learning, honour, and greatneſs.

If any thing more can be done, than has been done, for the ſuppreſſion of vice and wickedneſs, ſo awfully prevalent, and for the promotion of virtue, we entreat you to come up to the help of the Lord, and your country, in this caſe: we need the exertion of every one in ſo important a cauſe. If you can do no more, let us have your example of piety and goodneſs: the force of example, eſpecially the example of thoſe who are in ſuperior ſtation, is amazingly great---they may do much towards reforming the vices of the age, if they be unanimous and ſteady in the endeavour, and lead the way of virtue themſelves.

We willingly reſt aſſured of what we really wiſh—that you will be examples of virtue, public ſpirit, moderation, juſtice, and holineſs—that you will be nurſing fathers to the church of Chriſt, remembering that you are but *ſervants* to God, though dignified above your fellow-ſervants for a little ſeaſon.

May the *Father of lights* ſhine on your paths: may you receive that aid and direction from the fountain of all wiſdom, which ſhall enable and effectually engage you to act a faithful part towards God and man; and fit you to take an exalted ſeat at his right hand, to enjoy the bounteous rewards of fidelity.

Before I cloſe, I muſt not fail to execute the command of Chriſt by his apoſtle, by putting this whole aſſembly *in mind to be ſubject to principalities and powers, and to obey magiſtrates**. The powers which be are ordained of God, and to reſiſt them in the regular diſcharge of their duty, is to reſiſt the ordinance of God, and highly provoking to him†. We muſt needs be ſubject not only for fear of the wrath which they will execute on us, but for conſcience ſake. It is a moſt inconſiſtent and diſtracted piece of conduct, to ſet up rulers, and then diſobey their juſt & needful laws; or to condemn their meaſures before we are well acquainted with the reaſons of their proceedings. To *deſpiſe dominion, and ſpeak evil of dignities, and things they know not*, are reckoned among thoſe things which compoſe the moſt hateful character‡. Rulers are *miniſters*

of

* Titus iii. 1. † Romans xiii. 1, 2. ‡ Jude, 8 & 10.

of God, for our good; and while faithful to their truſt, *attend continually upon this very thing—for this cauſe pay ye tribute alſo.* It is reaſonable that thoſe who devote their time and talents to ſerve the public, ſhould have an honorable reward: If *wiſdom and knowledge* be neceſſary qualifications in rulers, they ought to have a generous ſupport; for much time, labour, and expence, are needful thus to qualify them. It becomes ſubjects to ſtrengthen the hands of their rulers; and not unneceſſarily increaſe the weight of their burdens. While they rule in equity, and give us opportunity, it becomes us to *live a quiet and peaceable life in godlineſs and honeſty:* it becomes us to offer up prayers and ſupplications, with thankſgiving, for thoſe in authority*. We have duties to diſcharge towards the ruler, as well as he towards us. We are as much bound to aid and obey the ruler, as he is to rule us in righteouſneſs.

Let us then all, rulers and ſubjects, ſtudy to diſcharge with faithfulneſs the reciprocal duties we owe to each other: in every relation let us act with a ſupreme regard to God, before whoſe awful bar we muſt all meet, ere long, and ſtand, undiſtinguiſhed by any preſent titles, or badges of ſuperiority, to receive a reward according to the deeds done in the body. Let us ever bear on mind our near connection with the eternal world, to which we are haſting as faſt as the nimble wing of time can carry us. And while we live together on earth, live in peace and unity, in conformity to the God of peace; till, purified by his grace from all thoſe corruptions which cauſe ſo much ſtrife, confuſion, and miſery, in this life, we ſhall brighten into his perfect and glorious image, and unite together in realms of light, of eternal peace and holineſs—there may the love of God ſwell our hearts, and his high praiſes dwell on our tongues for ever and ever—through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom be eternal glory.

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* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.